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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000369

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGES ABUSES BY
SECURITY FORCES

Classified By: Ambassador William Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Charge d'Affaires and poloff presented the French translation of the 2008 Human Rights report to the Minister of Human Rights on April 9. The Minister readily acknowledged that Congolese security forces, specifically the Republican Guard, commit human rights violations. He said the DRC needs to concentrate on training its security forces in human rights and that it needs technical assistance and financial support. We also presented a French translation of the 2008 Trafficking in Persons report. The Minister expressed interest in our recommendation that the GDRC develop comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and was surprisingly frank. The Minister was refreshingly open in discussing Congolese human rights abuses. It is uncertain, however, whether the Ministry of Human Rights has significant influence over the nation's security forces. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Fulfilling a promise he made several weeks earlier, Charge d'Affaires, accompanied by poloff, presented the French translation of the 2008 Human Rights report to Human Rights Minister Upio Kakura Wapol on April 9. Kakura expressed appreciation, noting he had already read the original English version but looked forward to reading the French to fully understand the report. The Minister welcomed the USG's concerns and its interest in promoting human rights in the DRC.

¶3. (C) In response to Charge's review of the report's highlights, the Minister acknowledged that there are still many human rights problems with the Congolese security forces in general and, specifically, with the Republican Guard, the elite unit of the military that reports directly to the president. He explained that it was difficult to maintain control over every individual in the security forces, implying that human rights abuses by the military, when they occurred, were the result of individuals acting alone and not in response to orders from above. Charge made the point that, while the U.S. had issued a report outlining the Congolese military's human rights abuses, we did not just criticize. We were also active in helping to improve the military's human rights record through training programs, such as the leadership training program, which included courses on human rights and the military code of conduct. We would also include a large human rights component in the upcoming Rapid Reaction Force training program, to begin this summer in Kisangani. Kakura expressed gratitude for our emphasis on human rights in USG-sponsored military training programs. He also expressed interest in our recent international visitor program for parliamentary Defense and Security Commission members. Kakura suggested that a human rights visitors program be set up for parliamentary Human Rights Commission members as well.

¶4. (SBU) Referring to the recent UN Human Rights Council decision to abstain from naming an independent human rights expert, the Minister said that more experts and reports are not needed. The causes and problems of human rights abuses are already known. The DRC needs to concentrate on training soldiers, police, and intelligence services agents on human rights. He said that the GDRC needs technical assistance and financial support in this effort.

¶5. (SBU) We also presented Kakura a copy of the 2008 Trafficking in Persons report with the corresponding French translation. He acknowledged human trafficking problems exist in the DRC and expressed a desire to collaborate with the USG in addressing TIP. He was interested in our suggestion of developing comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation. In addition, Kakura shared with us the Human Rights Ministry's internal action plan for 2009. The Ministry has planned employee training seminars in six provinces promoting awareness of the 2006 Law Against Sexual Violence and the newly passed 2009 Child Protection Code.

¶6. (C) Comment: The Minister was surprisingly open and engaged in a frank discussion with us on human rights abuses committed by state security forces. He showed eagerness to search for solutions to preventing human rights abuses and protecting civilians. However, he deflected our suggestion to allow International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Joint Human Rights Office access to National Intelligence Agency (ANR) and Republican Guard holding cells and prisons. Despite the high interest level in human rights expressed by

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Kakura, we question his influence vis-a-vis the security forces and are uncertain to what extent he is able to effect meaningful reform. End comment.
GARVELINK